Kintsugi

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Kintsugi

by unnaturalredhead

Summary

The plunge into the frigid ocean didn't claim their lives, but it did claim Will's memories.

Kintsugi - the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum. As a philosophy it treats breakage and repair as part of the history of an object, rather than something to disguise.

Notes

This was inspired by kat1111984's S4 headcanon on Tumblr. It was just too good to pass up. It's completely wrecked my brain. This first chapter is short, but I couldn't wait to get it started!

http://kat1111984.tumblr.com/post/131707170294/hannibal-s4-idea

A Familiar Stranger

Will's mind had endured many traumas over the years, between his particular blend of personality disorders and neuroses, several concussions accrued in the line of duty, more than a few seizures, and a bout of encephalitis. Will considered it a miracle his brain still worked at all. If he ever had any doubts, though, about how well his brain worked, or for how long it would continue to do so, he never mentioned it, especially not to Hannibal.

The impact with the crash of the sea, or maybe a rock, split a gash across Will's temple and knocked him unconscious. If it weren't for Hannibal, Will would certainly have drowned, and he nearly did regardless. Hannibal managed to drag him out of the water, forcing air into his lungs until Will coughed up brine and blood. A minute longer and Will would have been lost to fate.

Without access to a hospital or proper medical supplies, Hannibal could only wait, hoping that the gash across Will's forehead, next to the one of his own making, would prove to be superficial. Will ran a fever, perspiration shining on his forehead, his cheeks flushed and hot, but he remained conscious, even if only barely so. For a week, Hannibal doted on Will, tending his wounds and providing everything he could. Will made helpless, needy sounds at his discomfort, nothing truly able to provide him relief. Hannibal barely left Will's side, though Will would have only barely noticed the absence if he had left.

Will's fever broke on the eighth day after they washed up out of the grasp of the sea. Pained, hot recovery made way for peaceful sleep, and Hannibal sighed happily, knowing that Will, his Will, would return to him soon. Hannibal slept soundly for the first time, waiting for Will to wake.

When Will did finally wake, it was with a splitting headache. The room was too bright, unfamiliar, not his own. Not a hospital, certainly, but he noticed the IV hanging above him. Will surveyed the room, his mind swimming in fire, his wounds aching as they healed. A familiar stranger dozed in the chair, holding Will's hand. Will recognized the man's face, broad lips and high cheekbones, and Will even knew what the man's eyes would look like open, but he couldn't remember anything about him.

Will squeezed his fingers around Hannibal's, unsure of how else to interrupt the man's slumber. Hannibal stirred, brushing his thumb along Will's hand with tender reassurance that he was there, then opened his eyes.

"Will," Hannibal cooed. Will liked the way his name sounded coming from the man's lips. "How are you feeling?"

Will took a moment to search for the man in the depths of his memory. His accent was familiar, ever present throughout his mind, but Will couldn't remember why. He answered tentatively, "I'm not sure… I'm sorry. This is probably something I should know, but," he paused, searching his mind again to no avail, "Who are you?"

Hannibal didn't know how to respond. He never considered that Will would awaken a different man than the one that pulled them into the rolling Atlantic, the man that saw into Hannibal's world and chose to join it. He let a small whine of hurt and desperation squeak out of his chest before speaking.

"Do you know who you are?" Hannibal asked, ignoring Will's question.

"Will," he answered, before realizing that the man had already said that much, "Will Graham." He looked at the clock hanging on the wall, and a distant memory clicked in the back of his skull. "My name is Will Graham. It is 8:17 in the morning, and I don't know where I am."

"Good," Hannibal said, "What do you remember?"

Will frowned, furrowing his brow in thought, "I remember tasting salt and blood. It was cold. Then I was really hot. I remember trying to shake the sheets off but I couldn't move because it hurt so much. It felt like the time I was stabbed, back when I was a cop."

Hannibal smiled, though he was far from happy. He debated whether to tell Will that he had, in fact, been stabbed, but ultimately decided against it. Will needed to rest, and to remember organically. Considering everything they had been through together, and everything they had done, it was best if the memories returned gently. At least that way, there was a chance Hannibal wouldn't have to spend another half a decade, at least, chasing after the Will Graham he knew and loved.

"Do you know who I am?" Hannibal asked, feigning clinical disinterest, despite the fear that gripped him from within.

"No… but also yes. I know your face. I know your voice. I just don't know how," Will said. He tightened his grip on Hannibal's hand, a gentle reassurance that he didn't want Hannibal to retreat from the distance set between them.

"Then consider us friends," Hannibal said, without missing a beat.

Will evaluated the suggestion, but it didn't feel right. "No, we're more than friends. I know that much."

Hannibal leaned in at Will's words, giving Will a gentle kiss on his cheek. He turned his face into Hannibal's, nuzzling into the contact for a moment before deciding to kiss Hannibal back.

Their lips met, soft and hesitant, and sparks flew behind Will's eyes. He reached up to hold Hannibal's face closer, threading his fingers through Hannibal's silken hair, and he was breathless. He felt something new stir within him, and he liked whatever it was.

Hannibal, of course, kissed Will back, but he restrained himself from pushing too far. His Will would have kissed him passionately, but his Will was somewhere deep within himself, trapped behind his aching mind.

When their lips parted, Will found himself smiling and short of breath. He licked his lips, tasting Hannibal's kiss. "That was the first time we've done that," Will said with quiet confidence.

"How do you know?" Hannibal asked, curious to what Will's mind was allowing him to know.

"I've never felt what I just felt before now," Will said. It would have been better under different circumstances, and he could feel Hannibal's disappointment as if it were a part of himself. "I'm sorry it wasn't better for you," he added, quietly.

"You have nothing to be sorry for, Will. You don't need to ever apologize to me," Hannibal said, brushing a gentle hand along Will's newly scarred jaw. Will simply nodded. He didn't know much, but he knew that this familiar stranger felt like home.

The First Shard

Chapter Summary

Hannibal gets back in the kitchen, and Will remembers something.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal made a point to avoid telling Will his name. It was a cruel trick, this he was well aware of, but a small, fragile part of him was afraid Will would remember the bad memories before he could remember the good. Hannibal feared losing Will again, as he had many times before. The mere thought of it shook him to the core.

Will sighed into the last sips of his coffee. It had been days without any significant return of memory, and his head still pounded. Hannibal was only mildly helpful on the subject, but would only rearrange the bits of Will's mental record, never filling in the gaps.

"I know you're frustrated, Will," Hannibal said, refilling Will's mug, "But if I were to tell you everything that happened in the span of time that you've lost, it would be inaccurate to your own experience. I lived a different series of events, and though our timelines are very much intertwined, they are not the same."

Will knew Hannibal was right, but still scowled. "You could at least explain to me why my memories are gone."

"A head injury. You were knocked unconscious, and then you developed a fever. Your brain didn't have ample time to recover from the initial injury," Hannibal replied, choosing his words carefully to portray facts exclusively.

"A head injury," Will echoed, mostly to himself. He touched the gash on his temple, now mostly healed. He had inspected it in the mirror, noticing the contrast between its ragged form and the faint, sleek line tracing across his forehead. He wondered how he got the latter of the two, but didn't ask, knowing he wouldn't get a response. "I fell?" Will asked.

"Yes," Hannibal answered.

"What did I hit my head on?"

"That I can't answer," Hannibal said, "But not because I don't want to. I don't know what you hit your head on."

Will nodded, grateful that Hannibal clarified. The simplicity of the exchange was a welcome change from the roundabout answers he received for every other question.

“Can I ask you something?” Will asked meekly, still staring at his coffee as if answers were hidden in the bottom of the cup. It wasn’t the same inquisitive tone that Will had when trying to fill in the gaps, but a request. Hannibal hummed in response. “Can you cook for me?”

“What would you like?”

“The first meal you ever made for me,” Will said, looking up to meet Hannibal’s gaze.

“Do you remember what it was?” Hannibal asked.

“No, but I can see the way you move in the kitchen, like you’re dancing. You’re at home when you cook. That kind of ease comes with practice, and if you’re that practiced, you must have made something for me before all this happened,” Will said, his reasoning sound and succinct, “And I want to at least remember that.”

“It won’t be the same. I don’t have the same ingredients at my disposal,” Hannibal said, wrinkling his nose at the fact that he hadn’t eaten his own homemade kidney sausages in years. Hannibal wondered if he’d ever taste them again.

“As close as you can get then,” Will said, hopeful that Hannibal would concede on just this one point. “I’m tired of canned soup.”

Hannibal couldn’t disagree, and a hearty breakfast would serve them both well. He’d have to go shopping. The cabin had supplies, but nothing fresh, and nothing that Hannibal was proud to serve.

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Hannibal’s quick trip to the nearest town, a small place that travelers often stopped when they ran low on gas, but for no other reason, left Will alone just long enough to explore the recesses of his mind. He hadn’t told Hannibal that the reason his head hurt so badly was because of the noises ricocheting through his skull. He heard so many things, a deafening whir, but he hadn’t taken the time to really listen.

He could hear Hannibal’s voice, in amongst the cacophony, speaking Will’s name as if it were gospel. If he concentrated, he could make Hannibal’s voice harmonize with itself, a choir singing only Will’s name. He heard his own breathing as a part of this melody.

Will concentrated harder. It wasn’t breathing, it was the beginning of a word that started with ‘H.’ It only sounded breathy because he couldn’t hear the rest of it. Whatever it was, it was important enough to rattle throughout his skull in response to the choir singing in his brain. Will covered his ears to drown out what little background noise there was, and listened.

Hhhh, Will’s own voice breathed. Will needed it to sound like a syllable.

Hhhaa, Will heard, a chuckle of laughter between notes.

Hhhaaannn. He tilted his head at the roundness of an actual syllable, furrowing his scarred brow in concentration. *Han*, his mind repeated, a rhythm keeping time within himself.

Will smirked, triumphant. He had something more distinct than just a noise, and it meant something to him. He knew it had to do with the man that now occupied his time. The familiar blue eyes, high cheekbones, and plump lips that seemed ever present in his fragmented memories had a sound, and Will figured it was part of a name.

When Hannibal returned, bags in hand, Will met him at the door. Hannibal had started to greet Will, but Will interrupted him with a kiss, hard enough to press Hannibal to the door. Will gripped the man's face, thumbs pressed against perfect cheeks, and breathed him in. Hannibal's scent, faint, slightly floral and metallic, and now stained with cold, teased Will.

To be fair, though, everything about Hannibal teased Will.

Hannibal hummed into the kiss, an affectionate ambush tinged with vigor and enthusiasm. He would have kissed back harder, had his hands not been occupied with the makings of a first meal made new again, so he merely accepted Will's kiss, softening into it. Hannibal was more pleased with this second kiss, the passion of which insinuated that Will remembered something fond about him.

When their lips parted, Hannibal spoke, voice gentle and eyes sparkling blue in the brightness of the morning light. "What did you remember?"

Will laughed, turning his eyes down from Hannibal's omniscience, amused that Hannibal knew exactly what the kiss was for. "I gave some rhythm to the incessant noise inside my head. It was so confusing before. It made my head hurt."

"Does your head still hurt?" Hannibal asked, laying his cheek against Will's forehead, halfway out of fondness, and halfway to feel for any signs of lasting fever. There weren't any, of course, and hadn't been any for days, but Hannibal still felt compelled to check.

Will nodded, a slight grimace at the admission. Noticing Hannibal's concern, he added, "It's better now that all the noise has some sort of order. It's hard to remember anything when you can't even hear your own thoughts."

"What insight did organizing this noise give you?"

"I can hear your voice," he looked up into Hannibal's eyes before continuing, "Saying my name. A hundred different versions, all in your voice. It's as if you're an ever present memory trying to resurface all at once."

Hannibal dropped the bags he was holding, paying no mind to the potential of cracked eggs, so he could wrap his arms around Will. He laced one of his hands through Will's curls, cradling his head, and pressed the smaller man against his chest. Hannibal didn't want Will to see the flurry of emotions he was having trouble controlling, his face no doubt displaying pride, love, and fear with equal intensity. Hannibal bit his lip and steadied his breathing. Will nuzzled into the embrace happily.

Once he had collected himself, Hannibal spoke. "Is that all?"

“It’s not a lot, but it’s a start,” Will answered. He wondered if he was referring to the choir of his name in Hannibal’s voice, or the syllable he had so artfully reconstructed.

Hannibal merely hummed in approval, pulling away from the embrace to return to his assignment. A real breakfast was in order, and Hannibal wouldn’t let himself get distracted away from it.

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Will admired the way Hannibal moved in the kitchen. It was something he knew he had watched before, but he looked on with fresh eyes.

“Smells good,” Will noted, watching from his seat on the other side of the counter.

“Circumstance prevents me from recreating this meal exactly,” Hannibal responded, a distinct air of irritation in his voice.

“I’m sure it will be fine.” Will watched the way Hannibal’s forearms, tan and lithe, rippled as he chopped peppers and onions. Will considered himself lucky, for just a moment, that he got to see this for the first time, a second time. When he remembered everything, which he was certain he would eventually, he would have two first experiences to think back on fondly. “What made it better the first time?” he asked, genuine curiosity displayed through the tilt of his head.

“Small town grocery store eggs have little flavor. Organic eggs from local farmers are best. And the meat…” Hannibal said, his voice trailing, unsure of how to approach the subject. “I always made my own sausage,” he finished, the sentence flowing from his lips as if it were poetry.

“Meat from the local butcher?” Will asked.

The corners of Hannibal’s eyes wrinkled with a genuine smile. The local butcher. It wasn’t incorrect; the right box, but the wrong corner. If this had been *his* Will sitting across from him, Hannibal might have winked at the insinuation.

“Yes,” Hannibal finally replied, paying no mind to the long pause between Will’s question and his answer, which was decidedly not a lie. Will didn’t notice, or at least didn’t appear to.

Hannibal tossed the peppers and onions in with the sausage sizzling on the stovetop, now golden brown. As the onions began to caramelize in the sausages’ juices, peppers softening from the heat, Hannibal expertly cracked four eggs over the mixture in one fluid motion.

“You make it seem easy,” Will commented, impressed by Hannibal’s expertise in the kitchen.

“I’ve had a lot of practice,” Hannibal said, stirring the contents of the skillet before adding a variety of spices.

Hannibal deposited half of the scramble on Will’s plate before dishing out the remainder. Will waited for Hannibal to round the counter to eat, though he could barely contain his

enthusiasm for a homecooked meal. Once Hannibal settled into the seat next to Will, he kissed Hannibal on his cheek, a small gesture of thanks.

“Scrambled eggs for our first meal together?” Will asked, “So did I stay over, or did you?”

Hannibal laughed, “No such luck, my dear Will. I brought you breakfast before work.”

“We worked together?”

Hannibal hummed, but forked his breakfast into his mouth so he wouldn’t have to elaborate. Will followed suit, taking a bite of sausage and seasoned eggs. A light swung behind his eyes, and suddenly he was at a small hotel room table, Hannibal opposite him in a perfectly tailored suit.

I’m very careful about what I put into my body, which means I end up preparing most meals myself. A little protein scramble to start the day. Some eggs, some sausage.

Will heard Hannibal’s words as if they were fresh out of his mouth, and he gasped slightly at it. Another light swung in his mind, and he was back at the counter, staring into the food on his plate.

“You’re right,” he said, when he sensed Hannibal looking at him, “It’s not the same as before.”

Hannibal studied Will’s face, searching for anything that he could read. Will’s brow was furrowed slightly, cheeks sucked tight against his teeth as he turned his thoughts. Will took another bite, savoring the flavor, chewing slowly. Hannibal mirrored, carefully continuing his breakfast.

Will reached his hand to meet Hannibal’s, only barely touching his own calloused fingers to the man’s longer, more elegant ones. He deliberated on how to articulate his thought, the brief moment of clarity amongst the noise. A memory.

“It’s still delicious, though,” Will added after a few minutes of silence. The images still bounced in his head, the choir still sung, and his own breathy syllable still chimed in, but it was a full name now, revealed to him in the flash of recollection. “Thank you, Hannibal.”

Will closed his eyes for a moment to relish in his success, Hannibal’s name no longer a mystery between them. One less puzzle piece for Will to focus on, one less shard of ceramic for Hannibal to arrange to make the teacup come back together. Will finally looked over, smiling with pride.

Hannibal looked back with tears in his eyes.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone who has commented or left kudos! I appreciate you all! :D

Primavera

Chapter Summary

Will struggles with nightmares, and Hannibal struggles with shame.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will often just laid in bed, listening to the clock on the wall mock his sleeplessness, a condescending *tick, tick, tick* as he stared at the ceiling. It was hard to sleep now that he could make sense out of some of the noise in his head, no longer the overwhelming babel that Will could push to the background, like cutlery clicking against dishes in a restaurant while conversations muddied the air. It had changed, now a series of voices murmuring just out of earshot. It was distracting, like hearing people you love argue with the door closed. Will strained to listen, eavesdropping within his own mind.

It was also hard to sleep because he feared the images his mind displayed for him. Nightmares plagued him, thrusting scenes of antlers and flayed angels in prayer and towers of flesh into his mind. He awoke screaming on several occasions, the scent of blood and decay lingering in the air for a moment before Will could usher it away with a splash of cold water on his face. After one particularly bad dream, Will wretched into the sink, and was certain he saw an ear in the aftermath, but when he blinked, it was gone.

Hannibal always noticed the bags under Will's eyes after the nights he avoided sleep. The coffee was always extra strong on those mornings, and Will appreciated the gesture. He also appreciated that Hannibal never asked what terrors his mind held, only giving a knowing look. It was a look of silent understanding, not one of pity, and Will appreciated that the most.

It was one of those mornings. Hannibal knew it immediately by the way Will shuffled down the hall to the kitchen, grunting a tired greeting to Hannibal as Will found his seat at the counter. Hannibal made the coffee without question, and filled Will's mug to the brim. Will drank it fast, ignoring the burn in his throat as he swallowed.

Will swirled the last sips of the brew around in his mug, mesmerized by how much it looked like blood in the moonlight, dark and reflective. He wondered how he knew that was what blood looked like in the moonlight.

"Are they memories, Hannibal, or just nightmares?" Will asked, exhaustion trailing on his voice.

Hannibal digested the question for a moment before speaking. "It is hard to assess the reasons why the mind reveals what it does, especially in sleep. I have no way of knowing, besides

what you allow me, what your mind reveals to you when you close your eyes. It could be your own way of reconciling the things you have had to process, or it could just be the projections of the unknown."

"If I tell you some of the things I've seen, would you tell me if they're memories?"

Hannibal frowned, but nodded slowly, certain he would regret the decision he made.

"Antlers. Not just some antlers, either, a whole room full of antlers. Nearly a bramble."

"Memory," Hannibal answered, sighing relief that he wouldn't have to explain much if Will pressed him about it.

Will didn't ask for Hannibal to elaborate, though, continuing, "Bodies covered in mushrooms?"

Hannibal grimaced. "Memory."

"Jesus," Will sighed, burying his face in his palms, rubbing his sleepless eyes. "Okay, but there's no way that the totem pole made of corpses is a memory."

Hannibal didn't need to respond, his face betraying the answer with perfect clarity.

"I think I'm going to be sick," Will said, his face pale. Hannibal filled a glass with cold water, sliding it gently across the counter to Will.

"It's little comfort to you now, but it's worth saying that the remnant images of things you've seen had stopped haunting you before the fall. They'll stop again, in time," Hannibal reassured, reaching across the counter to brush soft curls out of Will's eyes.

Will sighed to steady himself, waving the images out of his brain as if they were a swarm of insects. "I can't stand to sleep alone," he finally said, "Never minded it before, but I guess I had it better then. One horror at a time."

"Now you have them all at once," Hannibal agreed, tracing his fingers along Will's cheek and down his jaw in a tender gesture that he hoped would soothe Will.

"I think the thing that scares me the most is that I'm certain that I'm responsible for all the death I see when I close my eyes."

"You must trust me when I say that the deaths that frighten you aren't of your own making," Hannibal replied, cupping Will's face gently, raising his tired eyes to meet his own.

"And what about the deaths that don't frighten me?"

"They have their own stories to tell, but you have to listen."

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With Hannibal nearby, Will was finally able to rest, dozing on the couch in the vivid afternoon sunlight. He felt more at ease knowing that Hannibal could give context to the images that ran rampant while he slept. Understanding what he saw was more important than seeing it at all, and for a brief moment before he drifted to sleep, he decided that he could accept there being gaps as long as Hannibal was there to help him fill them in.

Hannibal sat in a low-slung, leather club chair, book in hand. He was too wrought with concern to read it, though, knowing that he and Will would have to move on from the cabin soon. It had been three weeks since their plunge into the ocean, and Hannibal knew that Jack wouldn't stop his search until he found them, dead or alive.

He didn't want to lie to Will, but he could think of nothing worse than the truth. Hannibal rarely felt shame, and he wasn't even sure that's what he was, in fact, feeling, but the desolate pit in his stomach churned when he thought Will might leave after learning the truth. Or worse, Will might turn Hannibal in. Or worse still, that Hannibal would let him.

Hannibal mulled it over, picking apart his emotions. He wasn't ashamed of the bodies he left in his wake, the pieces he took as souvenirs, transforming the most unsavory people into the most savory of meals. For that, he felt proud. Hannibal supposed that what he felt concerning Will was the opposite of proud, whatever that was.

He admired Will sleeping on the couch, curls falling over his heavy eyes, face free of torment. Hannibal's heart ached knowing that Will would have to fight to understand the things he would remember, the murders he felt were his own, the murders that *were* his own, the traumas, and Hannibal himself. He had considered simply telling Will everything, but he knew that it wouldn't bring back *his* Will, the man made from experiences, not memories.

There was the possibility, though, that Will would feel close enough to Hannibal to use him for support when the time came. Hannibal could hold Will close when the terrors returned, whispering reassurance in his ear. There was the possibility that enough good memories would return to render Will biased before the bad memories followed suit. There was the possibility that Will would end up by Hannibal's side regardless.

Hannibal was far away, lost in thought, when Will stirred. Will's eyes blinked open, delighting in the sight before him. Hannibal's cheekbones were smooth, radiant in the afternoon light, flecks of gold glinting in his blue eyes. His hands were folded neatly, quietly, over the book he had disregarded. Will liked the way Hannibal's soft, graying hair fell over his brow, deep creases left behind by the thoughts running through his head.

The feeling Will had in this moment illuminated a memory within him, and a light swung behind his eyes. He found himself sitting on a bench, a great painting perched before him, Hannibal at his side. It felt like returning home after a long time, relief and bliss and excitement all swirled into a distinct sort of comfort. Underneath it all was a dull ache, the kind that creeps out from missing something deeply, the hungry longing of separation dissipating upon regaining what was lost. The vision of Hannibal beside him turned his attention away from the painting, and smiled at Will.

If I saw you every day forever, Will, I would remember this time.

The light swung behind Will's eyes again, and Hannibal was back in the leather chair, close enough to touch, but still far away. Will hummed in delight at the sight, hoping he would remember this time above all others, and Hannibal turned to look at him.

"We should go back to Florence," Will said, "You can show it to me properly this time."

Hannibal twitched at the sentence, taken by surprise at the moments of clarity Will was afforded after long awaited rest. A smile pulled across his lips, wrinkling the corners of his eyes.

"Not just the Primavera... though I don't think I'd mind seeing it again," Will added, his eyes sparkling at the memory afforded to him. He extended his fingers, prompting Hannibal to take his hand.

"I can show you the whole world, if you'll let me," Hannibal said, curling his hand around Will's, "But let's start with Florence."

Chapter End Notes

Back to Florence they go! Why on Earth would Hannibal return to Florence, after the messes he's left? Because he's a huge sap and Will wants to go. Anything for the precious little teacup!

Your kudos and comments give me life, and I appreciate you all! :3

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!